Flashlight Used to Find Brain Defects in Babies

An ordinary flashlight is being used routinely to find brain defects in infants examined at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, according to Drs. Philip R. Dodge and Philip Porter.

The flashlight which illuminates the cranial cavity has aided the diagnosis of a variety of cerebral abnormalities, the two physicians wrote in the December *Archives of Neurology*, published by the American Medical Association. They urged wider application of the method, termed transillumination and employed as early as 1831 by Richard Bright with sunlight and candle.

In the newborn or very young infant, the authors said, transillumination may be the only definite way to find whether anything is amiss. In addition, they said, the technique can be useful in following the course of a brain condition.

The authors said they used a two-battery flashlight with the glass lens removed and a soft rubber cup attached for contact with the baby's head. The examinations were done in a dark room, they said, and color photographs of the illuminated brain were taken with flashbulbs.

The technique was generally successful in all infants up to one year old although the color and thickness of hair and complexion of skin influenced the results, they said.

This simple technique "has a much wider application to neurologic diagnosis than is generally realized," they said, but it "must be employed routinely before its usefulness can be fully appreciated."

Study Urged of Possible Morphine Substitute

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a nonaddicting substitute for morphine, the two physicians commented. A number of agents introduced for this purpose have proved to be potent pain relievers but only at the price of morphine-like side effects, they said. The only potent analgesic devoid of the capacity for producing physical dependence, nalorphine, has "unfortunately proved impractical . . . because of its bizarre mental effects," they said.

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES FOR PRACTICAL EVALUATION OF IMPAIRED LUNG FUNCTION IN INDIVIDUALS WITH OCCUPATIONAL CHEST DISEASES—Report of the Committee on Occupational Diseases of the Chest and Committee on Pulmonary Physiology, American College of Chest Physicians. Dis. Chest—Vol. 40:344 (Sept.) 1961.

The committees on Occupational Diseases of the Chest and on Pulmonary Physiology of the American College of Chest Physicians prepared this report, which outlines and recommends basic studies in both clinical evaluation and pulmonary function testing.